

HISTORY OF  
THE CHISUM WAR  
OR LIFE OF  
IKE FRIDGE



Stirring Events of Cowboy  
Life on the Frontier

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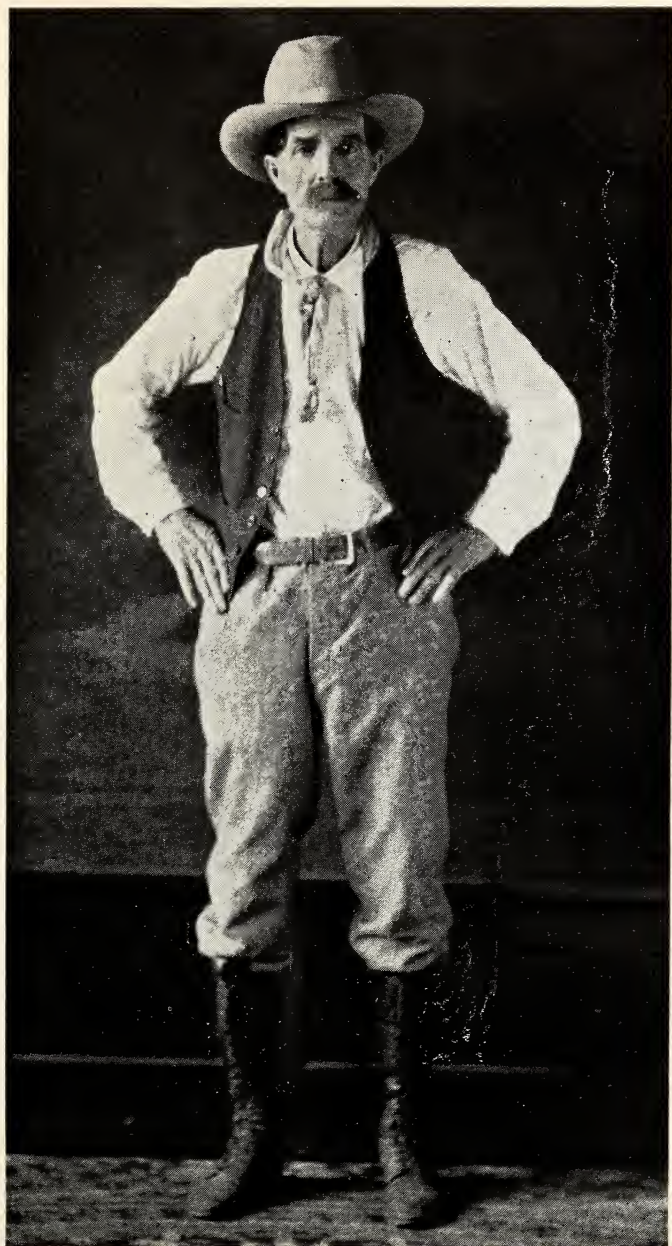
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IKE FRIDGE

## THE CHISUM TRAILS

Every Texan has read of the Chisum Trail, and has heard stories of the happenings thereon, and of the great beef herds piloted to northern markets over this "Hoof Railway" from the Lone Star State to Kansas.

This trail had its beginning in Denton County, near the center of this great state, and crossed the Red River near where St. Jo now stands. It continued through the Indian Territory, crossing the Big Blue near where McAlister, Okla. now is, and passed through the Osage Country where the world's wealthiest Indians are at present. This historic trail could be followed on to Coffeyville, Wichita, Abilene, and Fort Dodge, Kansas.

This "Hoof Railway" derived its name from that noble cattle king, Col. John Chisum, who opened the trail and drove cattle herds from his Clear Creek ranch in Denton county, to the Kansas markets and the end of steel.

That interpid pioneer, at the age of forty-five—a calm, peaceful and sober man, a gentleman in every respect, raised in cow country and determined to live in cow country—saw the approach of the settlers and the tenderfoot crowding the ranges, and his dark brow was knitted in thought as he decided to push westward still, and he opened another "Chisum Trail," little known to the present day reader, but a trail that served its purpose and played a big part in the opening of the western part of the Grand Empire of Texas and of the New Mexico country.

Col. Chisum purchased large herds of cattle



and started his drive to New Mexico from his "Home Creek Ranch" near the Concho river, going up the Concho to where Big Springs, Texas, is at present. He then made a cross-country drive to the Pecos river, a country that was well watered in the rainy seasons but in dry times presented an almost impossible obstacle, as there wasn't enough water for a distance of ninety miles to serve a trail herd.

He struck the Pecos at Horse Head Crossing, and proceeded up the river into New Mexico, establishing a ranch about thirty miles from Fort Sumner, where United States troops were stationed.

Cattle from this ranch were driven through to Denver, Colo., and marketed at Pueblo. Thus had the brave pioneer established another trail to live after him and to be used by his fellow men. This constituted the "Western Chisum Trail."



**IKE FRIDGE—A CHISUM COWPUNCHER**

I had been with Col. Chisum since I was fourteen years old, and in April, 1869, we left the Clear Creek Ranch in Denton county to go to the Chisum ranch on Home creek, forty miles east of Fort Concho.

I was just a boy but I was skilled in riding, roping and shooting, as these had been my daily pastimes practically all of my life.

Our outfit consisted of three thousand Texas cattle, thirty men, chuck wagons and three yoke of oxen—those patient, slow but strong and efficient beasts of 'burden that always reach their destination with their load, if they are given care and time.

We had a saddle remuda of one hundred head of horses, among which was every kind of cayuse you could wish for. There were horses that were trained for roping and holding, for cutting herd; and all the tricks known to the typical cow horse of the Southwest were in that bunch. Among these horses were to be found tough buckers, easy saddlers and a few good racers to furnish amusement at the proper time.

Ideal weather and good grazing for the herds made this a wonderful trip. Crossing through country that was a treat to the eye, and fording beautiful streams at intervals, we had a fine time on the drive.

Crossing the Brazos at Fort Belknap, out by where Colorado City, Texas, now stands, we reached the ranch about the middle of May.

This western ranch owned by the Colonel was

situated in fine cattle country; there was lots of Mesquite grass over the broad plains and enough hills and rocks to furnish shelter in the winter. It seemed a veritable breeding ground for the hearty Long Horns. The ranch house was built of pecan logs, with three large rooms, and was so sturdy that it would serve for a good fort in time of trouble. Large corrals were all about, constructed for the most part, of pecan, but with hackberry and other native timber used for convenience.

The Coggins Ranch headquarters were about four miles away, and that was considered a close neighbor. Chisum built a stone commissary, where he stored supplies for his men and the outfits in the surrounding country. This building, about 20x40 feet, had port holes for use in repulsing the Indians, and was surrounded by a high picket fence of Mesquite posts. Five or six families used this for a school which was taught at that time by a Prof. Whitius.

Numerous Indian fights in the country made it necessary to have a fortified place for the school.



**MY FIRST INDIAN FIGHT**

The roaming fever and a desire for more range caused this dauntless pioneer to seek further west for another ranch, and we set about gathering his cattle which were scattered over plains. It was open range country from the Colorado river to the San Saba, and during the brief period Col. Chisum had been in the country, his stock had learned to use quite a bit of territory in their quest for food and water.

We started on a cow hunt with an outfit of twenty men, with three horses to the man, and two pack horses. We had no skillets for frying, but each man had a tin for his coffee, and a rusty bread pan was tied on a pack horse. Our bread was made of flour, cold water, salt and soda. Each man cut him a green stick for his cooking. We trimmed the bark off, took the dough and rolled it around the stick and cooked it over the fire. Our meat was also cooked over the fire on the green boughs.

We worked until we had gathered a thousand head of cattle, when the boys remarked that we had not seen any Indians yet. Then one morning we had our herd in pens and were eating breakfast when a man from another outfit came and told us that the Indians were in the country, and they had had a fight with them and had set them afoot by capturing their horses.

It had rained that morning and the trail would be easy to follow, so the boss decided that we would follow them and detailed five men to stay with the cattle and horses, leaving the cattle

in the pens. As I had never seen any Indians I asked the boss man to let me go along with them. He objected, saying:

“Kid, you had better stay at the camp.”

But I said: “No, I want to go.”

The men urged him to let me go, but before I got back, I wished that I had listened to him.

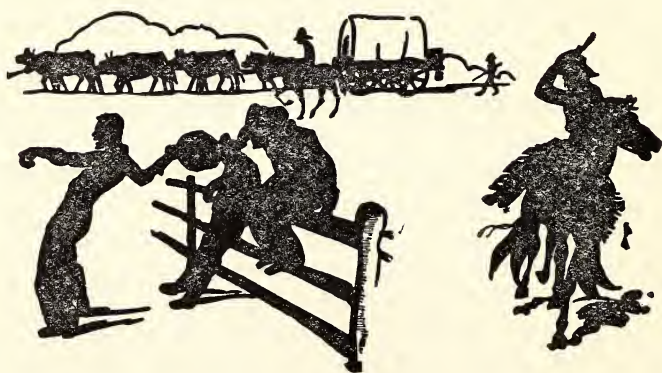
We followed the red men about six miles down the Colorado river. Bluff Creek came in on the north side of the Colorado and at the mouth of the creek, in a pecan thicket, we struck the Indians, being right at them before we saw them.

There was a rain of arrows and lead, coming thick and fast. Jeff Singleton, an old-time pioneer man, raised on the frontier and who had a sister and a brother-in-law killed by the Indians, was anxious to get at them and get revenge, so he was in front and began to snap his gun, which he found to be empty. As he whirled his horse to run an Indian shot him in the back with an arrow. One of the boys ran to him, took his knife and cut the sinew that held the spike to the wood. Singleton pulled the arrow out but he left the spike in his back.

We fought them about twenty minutes, killing ten and wounding two, who later were drowned as the band swam the river in making their escape.

We had had about enough excitement and went back to our camp. Singleton didn't seem to suffer from the wound, which was washed by his brother, who upon reaching the camp got an old

pair of horseshoe pinchers and pulled the spike out of Jeff's back. Three of the men then took him to the home ranch where he rested up about a week and came on back to the camp. We finished gathering the herd and went on back to the ranch.





## NEW MEXICO

The first of September we started this herd to the ranch that Col. Chisum was establishing in New Mexico, thus opening up the western Chisum Trail described in the preceding chapters. The new ranch was named the "Bosque Grande," meaning "Big Timbers."

Arriving at the ranch without any serious trouble we branded the cattle and turned them loose on their new range in a short time. The range that Chisum used then was crossed by the Pecos, the Seven Rivers, Maso and the Hondo; and after leaving the Pecos Valley was a hilly and mountainous country, but it afforded good grazing for the stock.

My work that winter was, with the help of five other men, to keep the Buffalo off the range.

During the cold "northers" the Buffalo would drift in by the thousand, and we had to turn them from the choice range to save it for the cattle.

**BURIED WITH HIS BOOTS ON**

On Christmas Day Col. Chisum invited all the men to his ranch for dinner, and while we were at the ranch a big negro got wild and killed a dog that belonged to a Mexican boy. When we got to them the boy was crying.

In the crowd was Charlie Nebow, a tall, slender, light complexioned Irishman. Nebow was a fine, jovial fellow when he was sober but he was quick tempered and easily stirred up when he was drunk. He wore his hair long like so many of the early day men, and was as true as steel at all times.

Charlie asked the boy what was wrong. The answer was:

"That negro killed my dog."

Nebow went over to the negro and asked him why he killed the boy's dog.

The negro said, "Maybe you don't like it."

They both pulled their guns which, worn in true cowboy style, were easy to get to. The negro was just a little the quicker on the draw and he shot Nebow in the top of the head. As Nebow fell he shot the negro through the thigh.

The ball had merely creased Nebow, glancing so he was not seriously hurt, and he got up and ran to the negro. He struck the black over the head with a gun barrel, knocking him over a box. He then pulled out his knife to cut the negro's head off but the father of the Mexican boy ran

to Nebow and pulled him off the negro who began running and shooting back at the crowd.

We all returned the fire, killing him instantly. The next morning we buried him. Some of the boys got a spade and went down to the Pecos river where they dug his grave. Taylor Ridge and I were detailed as a hearse, so we put a rope around his legs and got on our horses and dragged him to his grave. We wrapped him in his saddle blanket and buried him with his boots on.



### INDIANS STEAL OUR HORSES

In the spring of 1871 we went back to Texas with an outfit to gather another herd of cattle. We got to the Home Creek Ranch about the middle of May.

Five men and I stayed at the ranch while Col. Chisum and the rest of the bunch went to San Antonio, that famous frontier town that has seen so much bloodshed in its many battles, including the fall of the Alamo and its valiant defenders—that city that has been under five different flags—where he bought a cavy of horses.

When Chisum got back with the horses, he hired an outfit to gather the steers for the return trip to Mexico. They were gathered without any unusual happenings and were planning to take the trail the next morning but like a thunderbolt from a clear sky, an Indian attack was made against us.

After a short skirmish the red skins succeeded in getting away with all of our horses except five head.

Another trip was made after saddle stock, with Col. Chisum mounted on a mule and accompanied by a man by the name of Smith, myself and a half-breed Indian.

After the purchases were made we started back with the bunch of horses, and Col. Chisum left us to go to his old home in Denton county on business, leaving Smith in charge. He entrusted \$2000 to Smith's care with instructions to take it to the foreman, Jim McDaniel, at the ranch.

When we were near Cleburne, then a very small village, Smith rode ahead to locate a field to hold the horses in over night. Darkness came without his returning, so I sent the half-breed to a house where he secured a field in which to put the horses. Upon inquiring about our leader we found that he had not stopped to ask about grazing for the stock but had "lit-a-shuck" so to speak, taking the two thousand bucks with him.

The half-breed and I got two fresh horses and left the remainder of the cavy with the farmer to care for until we should return, telling him that we would go in search of Smith. We went back about eight miles and found a house where, upon inquiry, we learned that he had passed headed north. Riding on until about midnight we decided to stop until daybreak. Next morning we hit his trail, which was easily followed as a number of people along the way had seen him. After pushing our horses hard all day we overtook Mr. Smith about two miles north of Denison.

We got his horse and saddle and the two thousand dollars with which he was trying to escape, and we went back to where the horses had been left, proceeding on to the ranch with them.

When the Colonel returned from Denton we all started up the trail to Mexico again, with Col. Chisum as our trail boss. This was a slow, hard trip and we ran out of flour when we hit the Pecos river. There followed nineteen days of living just on beef. We had a preacher with us who prayed for flour, and expected his prayers to be answered literally. He was very timid when we started on the trip but he didn't have the stuff to stick, and was very tough when we reached the ranch, renouncing his religion.

**SET AFOOT WITH FOUR THOUSAND STEERS**

In the spring of 1872 we gathered more cattle in Texas. Chisum had bought Coggins' cattle, the neighboring rancher on Home creek. One outfit hit the trail and I came on with the second bunch of four thousand steers, all headed for the Bosque Grande Ranch in New Mexico.

When we reached the Pecos River we found where one of the cowboys with the first bunch had been killed by Indians. We drove on to Loving's Bend before we had any trouble but there the Indians surprised us at night and drove off all the horses except four that were being ridden on guard around the steers.

Had it not been for the fact that the herd was used to handling by this time and trail-weary from the many miles they had come we would have lost them all without more horses, but as they were accustomed to the routine of the trail, we used the four horses to point the herd and for flankers, the other boys driving on foot and helping to keep the bunch moving. We made it to the ranch in fifteen days with the entire herd except possibly a few which the boys afoot had to use their "Colts" on to keep from being run down and gored by the long keen horns known only to the "Texas Longhorn" and other kindred breeds.

You, of course, know that a cowboy has a decided distaste for "foot work" and it is easy to imagine the delight of all when the ranch was reached and "mounts" secured.



### THE WAR BEGINS

The Maxwell Ranch near Fort Sumner was considered a Mexican outfit. Although Maxwell was a white man, he had married a Mexican girl and he used Mexican punchers.

He was driving lots of stock from South Texas and I had been left at the ranch to cut trail herds that were being brought through Chisum range by Maxwell and others who were moving cattle either from Texas or to the markets. The two or three years passed had done much toward settling up the country and a lot of Texas cattle had been brought into Mexico.

One morning a herd was sighted, and Tabb and I went out to cut it for Chisum stock. It proved to be a Maxwell herd, all the punchers being Mex except the boss man. He and Tabb got into a dispute over some cattle and as Tabb rode into the herd, Maxwell's boss man shot him in the back.

When Tabb fell off his horse the Maxwell man struck a lope, and I began shooting at him. He ran off about a hundred yards and fell off his horse. The boss man at the ranch heard the shooting and came hurriedly toward us.

Two Mexicans ran up to me and said, "Maybe so Gringo dead." My gun was empty but I kept them off with it, as I was afraid to reach for Tabb's gun, knowing that would be giving away the fact that mine was empty, and knew they could shoot me before I could get Tabb's gun into position.

When the boys rode up, they ran into the Mexicans and killed one of them. Four or five

other Mexicans went to their fallen boss, picked him up and put him in their chuck wagon. We took Tabb back to the ranch where he died in a few minutes. We buried him the next day.

Cattle thieves had been making things miserable for us and there had been several skirmishes from time to time, but Col. Chisum had held the boys in, knowing full well what a range war meant. However, when Tabb, who was a very efficient man and was the Colonel's trusted bookkeeper, was killed so cowardly, having been shot in the back while trying to cut out some of Chisum's cows which would have been carried on with the herd if not taken out, the Colonel declared war. He said the rustlers had to be exterminated or driven off the range. That meant fight to the death, as every loyal cowboy would stay with his outfit and fight for his boss as though for his general in time of war.

Tabb was particularly valuable to the ranch in that he was not only a good bookkeeper, which was a scarce article in that country then, but he was a high spirited Kentuckian and a good man in a fight. Fighting men were needed to help conquer the enemies of the stockmen and establish law and order. If his fate had not been turned when the Maxwell boss started to make trouble it might have been a different story.

A few days later Jeff Chisum, the invalid brother of the intrepid Colonel, went to a dance at Port de Luna in company with another man. They were set upon by the Mexicans and robbed and beaten almost to death. This following so closely after the death of Tabb, put the Colonel on the war path and he told the boys not to let a Mexican go through the range.

## BILLIE THE KID

"Billie the Kid," one of the most noted and among the most dangerous of all New Mexico outlaws, joined with the rustlers in a crusade against our ranch. They organized and began a series of well planned cattle raids.

The Kid's career of crime started when he was quite young, and he literally grew up to kill—and to be killed. He was sixteen when his father died. Billy was a great lover of his mother but when she married again he began to drift. He bought the best horse that could be found and secured the very best in firearms that existed in that day. Long rides over the country alone followed and his mother talked to him time and again in an effort to settle him down but all to no avail.

Billy went into a Mexican sheep herder's camp one day and found it deserted at the time. It was the custom of the times to make yourself at home if in need of food and shelter, whether the owner was at home or not. In keeping with that custom the Kid began the preparation of a meal. Just as he had it ready to eat the Mexican came in and began abusing him. The Mex ran at Billy with a knife, but was stopped by a bullet from the Kid's gun.

This was the first man Billie had ever killed, and though he went home and was not suspected of having killed the Mex, he was put on the war path. His murderous career was definitely begun and though the first killing was probably justifiable, and in self defense, others followed that

were not.

Soon after this incident the Kid saw four prospectors in the mountains. They had good horses and Billie thought they had plenty of money. He laid a plan to kill them. Stealing into their camp one night while they were asleep, he brutally killed the four of them. He took what money they had and hid the horses in the mountains.

The Kid then returned home but his frequent absences and roaming disposition attracted attention and the cloud of suspicion settled upon him. His mother's home was surrounded at night and the Kid demanded. Instead of surrendering he fixed up a kind of dummy and put it in the doorway. Firing a few shots from near the dummy to attract the officers' attention in that direction, he whirled and ran out a back door. However, he was discovered and fired upon as he ran, receiving two bad wounds. The faithful mother made trips to his mountain rendezvous daily and nursed her outlaw son back to health. There could be no more of deceiving the public. The die was cast. So as soon as he could ride, "Billie the Kid," as he was ever afterward known, took the trail. Hiding out in Colorado for awhile, then boldly returning to his old haunts, he joined hands with the cattle rustlers of the district, where his skill with firearms and his reckless daring won him the leadership.

A period of raiding followed that was never before equalled and frequently United States troops had to take a part to defend the ranchers and their property.

## **IKE FRIDGE AND CHISUM PUNCHERS ARE CAPTURED**

A few days after the Colonel declared war on the rustlers, two of the boys on the north side of the range killed a Mexican. They were arrested and put in jail in Las Vegas. Then one day about a week later while eight of us were on the range branding calves, a detachment of soldiers from Las Vegas surrounded us and we were arrested for the killing of the Maxwell boss in the trail herd the day Tabb was killed. We were put in jail with the other two boys.

A white man in Las Vegas, who was a friend of Chisum's got in touch with the Colonel in Kansas City where he had gone on business. The friend informed him that his boss man and nine punchers were in jail in the Mexican town which was controlled by the rustlers and their element.

After several weeks of confinement we were tried before a justice of the peace and with the aid of a lawyer Chisum had sent from Kansas City, eight of us were turned loose. However, they refused to release the first two that were locked up, announcing that it was their intention to hang them. Jim McDaniel, our boss man, said: "You will never hang them unless you do it in two or three days." McDaniel told the men to be ready to go at any time, as he would soon come after them.

We got back to the north camp and McDaniel went on to the ranch. He got a bunch of men and twenty of us went back to Las Vegas for the prisoners. We arrived there about daybreak with



six extra horses and saddles. Three other white men and a negro were in the jail and the boss figured he would take them away from the Mexicans, too.

McDaniel took five men and went to the jail, leaving the rest of us to guard the streets. He said upon leaving us: "When you see any men, go to shooting up and down the street." They found two Mexican guards, both asleep. Jim McDaniel took their guns away from them and pushed the door in where the keeper slept, capturing him and securing the keys to the jail itself. Then he put the two guards and the jailer in a cell and took the five white men and negro out and armed them with the guns he had secured from the Mexicans. He locked the jail and threw the keys away on the way back to our camp.

On the return trip to the camp I was talking to the negro and said: "Snowball," (that was the nickname I had given him) "if those Mexicans follow us we will have to put up a fight." He was greatly excited, but as the jail delivery was accomplished without any shooting or other disturbance and before the citizens were awake, we got away without any trouble and went to the ranch that night.



## MEXICANS KILL CHARLIE RANKINS

A couple of days after the Las Vegas trip and the jail delivery, McDaniel told Charlie Rankins and me that he wanted us to go to Port de Luna that night.

Rankins was about thirty-five and high-strung. He was as brave as need be, but was too reckless. When we went after our saddle horses that evening I told him he had better catch the fastest horse in his string as we were liable to have to do some running. He was older and thought that I was unduly excited, and replied:

"Oh, you are only scared."

I said: "No, not that, but you know how those Mexicans are."

He was head-strong and selected an easy saddler for the long ride instead of a swift runner, which fact probably caused his death. After a night ride we stopped outside of the town about three in the morning and rested our horses until day break. As the morning light came, we rode into Port de Luna, not knowing what dangers were ahead and really not caring much, since we were accustomed to meet all emergencies with our six guns smoking, and the Chisum outfit had a reputation of winning most of such arguments.

Stopping our mounts in front of the first chili joint we came to we had breakfast, with plenty of the black coffee the restaurant men knew cowboys liked. The stores were beginning to open when we had eaten, so we rode over to buy our stuff before too many people were astir

—intending to make peaceful departure if possible.

I stood guard with the horses ready while Rankins bought tobacco and cartridges the boys had sent for and attended to the business McDaniel had sent us on. About the time the things that were bought from the big Mex behind the counter were safely in the pack sacks, I saw three Mexicans coming across the street. I stepped in the store and told Rankins to hurry, that some officers were coming. As on the previous evening, he said:

“Oh, you are only scared.”

They came in the store and asked us where we were going. Rankins replied in Spanish that we were going to a ranch. One of the Mexicans then said:

“You are Chisum’s cowboys.”

They went for their guns but we beat them to the draw and took their guns away from them. Knowing that all the Mex officers were in league with the rustlers and were trying to help them by jailing the Chisum cowboys, we didn’t feel that we were resisting real constituted authority in refusing to let them arrest us. After disarming them, we marched them and the store keeper to our horses, and adjusted our packs.

Mounting, we bade them “goodbye” and struck the trail out of town. Once out of town Rankins pulled down to a walk, and I urged him to ride up, feeling that they might get a bunch and follow us.

He said: “We will stand them off.”

Sooner than I even suspected we discovered

that we were closely pursued and I got Rankins in the notion of riding to escape, as we were greatly outnumbered. The outlaw population kept their horses ready for instant action and they had joined with their friends, the "officers," and were on our trail bent on getting our blood in revenge for those of their number we had killed on the range in the fights there.

Charlie's horse couldn't run fast and we were loaded with the results of our purchases. Also, our horses had been ridden practically all night, so the chase didn't last long until they were gaining on us. When the intervening distance had been cut to about two hundred yards they began shooting. Charlie Rankins was shot in the back. He fell over on his horse's neck, saying:

"They sure did get me."

He then told me to get away if I could, and seeing that he was actually "got" and that by remaining with him we would both be killed, I put spurs to my good mount and soon got ahead of them. They had checked up a bit on reaching Charlie, then came on after me. About four miles away there was a long canyon and I made for it. When I struck the head of the canyon I found it to be very rough with lots of rock and brush. Just as I got to the bottom my horse stumbled and fell, pinning my left leg. He jumped up, but my leg was hurt so badly that I thought it was broken. I hobbled to where my horse was, but by that time my leg was hurting so badly that I couldn't get on the horse. I led him back in the brush and tied him, and got behind a large rock, thinking they would pass me. It was not long

until they came.

As they passed on I recognized a white man in the crowd by the name of Perison. He was stealing cattle from Chisum. There was a Mexican behind Perison, and when the Mex got to where my horse fell, he got a sack of tobacco and some cartridges I had dropped. He then looked down at my horse's tracks, trying to see which direction I had gone.

He then picked up my trail and started toward me, and I knew he would see my horse if he came in that direction. I thought of trying to disarm him, but another idea came into my mind. Knowing I was crippled and could not put up much of a fight, I just decided I had better take the safest way. Then, too, he or some of his gang had killed my partner, Charlie Rankins, and I felt that there would be no harm in getting him in return. I knew that the other Mexicans would hear the shooting and that a quick getaway would be necessary to avoid capture or worse. Fast action was necessary as he was by that time only a few feet from me, coming with his gun in hand trailing my horse.

As I raised my gun he looked up and said, "hold up" in Spanish, but I shot him. When he hit the ground I picked up my sack of tobacco and cartridges. He had a new forty-five six shooter and belt of cartridges. I rolled him over and got them. The time that had elapsed had helped my leg and the excitement had helped me to forget the pain, so I made it to my horse and mounted. Riding up out of the canyon I looked back to see them coming toward me, but my good

horse struck a lope for the Pecos river, which we reached after some fast riding and crossed safely to the east side. I was then about ten miles above the ranch and turned my horse down toward it. I hadn't gone far, though, until I saw a party of horsemen coming up the river. I thought of hiding as my horse was too far spent to stand another chase after the long run he had just made to the river, but as the party came closer I recognized a horse in the bunch and the riders proved to be four of our own men.

On telling them what had happened I found that they seemed to be more anxious about the tobacco and cartridges than they were about the dead Mex. After smokes were secured and they began to talk it developed that they had just had a fight with Billie the Kid and some of his outfit, killing two of his men.





### THE BATTLE ON THE MASO

We all went on to the ranch and next day started out to brand some calves just as though no fighting had taken place. Working until night we made camp at an adobe house on the Maso creek. The house was about twenty feet long and fourteen feet wide. One door and a fire place were the only openings. We cooked in the fire-place and used a box for a table. Eight of us were in the house, some of the boys were cooking supper and the rest were on the bunks.

The moon was shining brightly and we had no thought of trouble until a noise was heard on the outside.

A man called "Hello."

Jim McDaniel, our faithful foreman, was a tall, light complexioned man, always sober, and ready to protect his men in every way possible. He was a good manager and boss and like the rest of us, was not married, as there were no women in the country at that time except Mexican *senoritas* and *senoras*. In fact, at one time I didn't see a white woman for four years. McDaniel had lots of nerve, and we were all willing to do as he said in any emergency, for he was a peaceful man and never rushed into trouble, desiring to avoid it if possible. When he heard the call "hello" he went to the door.

Perison, the cattle rustler, was the leader of the party outside and in answer to McDaniel's query, he said:

"We are officers of the law and we demand



your surrender."

McDaniel knew they were fake officers, just plain rustlers in fact, and if we surrendered we would likely be shot down by the Mex element like dogs, so he countered:

"I shall talk to the men."

With one accord we all said, "No, we will never surrender."

After having let us make our own decision, McDaniel then took charge of the affair and directed the fight in his usual able manner. He said, "We will all rush to the door as if we were going to surrender and then open fire on them. Be sure to get Perison first." So in answer to their demand for surrender, we sent them a full charge of lead.

We then rushed back into the corner to be out of line of their return fire as we were outnumbered, and because of the smoke from the guns, we couldn't tell just what effect our volley had had. The outlaws, most of whom were Mexicans, backed off about thirty feet to a lot of rocks, but kept up a continual fire at the door. Curtis, a young fellow about twenty-two, and an excellent shot, brave and daring as could be, but reckless beyond any degree of caution, rushed to the door and opened fire on the attackers. The Mexicans killed him instantly.

After a few minutes of intermittent firing, McDaniel said: "We will quit shooting for awhile and the rustlers will think we are all killed." They shot the door to pieces but it was not long until they quit shooting. We then heard one of them

say:

"They are all dead."

McDaniel whispered: "Let them come to the door and we will make another run on them."

As they came near the house we started to shooting at them. A Mexican will almost always run when the fight is hot and at close quarters, and as soon as we began our surprise volley they took flight, shooting as they ran, but the white men put up a strong fight. As the Mexicans whirled to run, McDaniel gave the order to charge and crowd them. We killed Perison and six others, the remainder making their get-away. All of our boys were wounded in the close fighting with the white men who had not run with the Mexicans except Charlie Nebow and me, and Nebow said:

"Kid, just you and I to finish this."

We went back and layed Curtis out on a bunk and cared for the wounded ones. There was so much shooting and fighting on the range that every real cowboy knew how to give first aid to a wounded man, and, if necessary, he could do a pretty fair job of treating him.

After the boys and McDaniel had been patched up they were helped on their horses and a trip started to a camp about six miles from there, where we knew about twenty men were stationed. It was a gruesome journey—two well men caring for five wounded ones and expecting an attack from the ones who had gotten away from the adobe house alive.

A Frenchman who had been a doctor, lived

not very far from the camp we went to, so three men of the twenty were sent for the doctor and his good wife. Others were sent as messengers to the ranch headquarters with news of the fight, which had been about the worst since hostilities had begun, having lasted for quite awhile and had resulted in the death of seven of the rustlers and one of our boys, with five more of them shot, more or less seriously.

Several of us went out the next morning and hauled the dead rustlers and threw them into a canyon. We had no tools for grave digging and you don't care to scratch a grave in the hard ground for a bunch of guys who had been trying to put you out of the running only the night before. We got Curtis' body and brought it over to the camp where it was buried. The French doctor and his wife stayed with the boys about a week and pronounced them all out of danger, then returned to their home.

**MANY CATTLE STOLEN**

During the Chisum trouble in 1872 the rustlers were very bad. One day while the main outfit was out branding calves, a man came to headquarters and reported that he had found a trail of about six hundred head of cattle going west to the mountains. He had examined the trail and found the tracks of eight horses and one burro. The boss and I and one other man were at the ranch. We went to the cow wagon on the range and got twelve men, ate lunch and got horses, and started after the cattle.

We struck the trail that afternoon and followed it until night. As the moon was shining and six hundred cattle leave a plain trail, it was decided to keep going, and the chase was kept up until the moon went down about two in the morning. Our horses were tired and we stopped and hobbled them so they could graze about a bit and rest. I was put on as first guard to watch the horses and keep a lookout for trouble. We hadn't been stopped more than an hour until I heard cattle. I listened awhile, then waked up the boss and told him I heard the cattle. He got up and listened. We could tell they were dry cattle wanting water bad.

The boss waked the other boys and we saddled our horses and went on. About a mile from the herd of cattle the boss began to ride slow so we wouldn't make any noise. We got in about two hundred yards of the herd and stopped for a council. Some of the boys wanted to wait until daybreak and some wanted to go on then. Mc-

Daniel turned to me and said:

“Kid, what do you think about it?”

I replied: “If I was doing this I would go up and turn loose all their horses.” They had the horses staked with saddles on six. We could see only two men around the herd. So McDaniel said he thought that was a good idea. There was no doubt at all about it being a stolen herd, as no legitimate rancher would have been driving in that direction and manner, so there was no use to hesitate about starting the fight.

The boss and Charlie Nebow and I got off our horses and slipped up on foot. We saw a little fire where six men were asleep. Turning all their horses loose we headed them toward the herd and went back to where our mounts were. McDaniel said, “Now we will slip around between the horses and the camp. Six men will go to the herd, three on each side, and the others will make a run on the camp.” The horses were drifted into the herd of cattle. Charlie Nebow and I and a puncher by the name of Blair went around the herd on one side.

When we got in about fifty yards of the cattle we saw a rustler coming around the herd toward us. It could be told that he was a Mex by the big hat he was wearing. He evidently thought we three were some of his own men as he came quietly on toward us for a time, but soon saw his mistake and turned back.

Nebow says to me: “Line him up.” We began to shoot at him. We ran him about a hundred yards when he either jumped off his horse

or fell off, we didn't know which. I ran and caught his horse, on which was a brand new California saddle. As I was about bareback I took the saddle. The other boys, who were going to their camp began shooting into it when they heard us firing, but they never did know whether they killed anyone or not. We got the cattle and all the horses and started back. When daybreak came we let the cattle graze and they drifted easily back toward their range and watering places, where we turned them loose again.

The saddle I had appropriated had blood all over it. Some of the boys laughingly remarked that the Mex's nose must have been bleeding.

This was about the last big raid the rustlers made that year as Uncle Sam soon sent a marshal into the country and later on troops came. There had been numerous raids and fights in which the other bunches of Chisum's punchers had taken part, but we have not tried to give them all here as the details would have had to come from others. I heard all about them at the time, but fifty years or more is a long, long time, to try to tell accurately, from memory, the details of battles that were not impressed vividly on one's mind from actual contact.



**"BILLIE THE KID" IS KILLED**

A United States marshal, Pat Garrett, was sent to help quiet the outlaws and stop cattle rustling. He soon decided that the best way to break the backbone of the gangs was to get the leader.

After several battles with "Billie the Kid's" gang and the death of some of his most prominent fighting men, Billie was finally trapped and captured, but after being sentenced to hang he killed two of his jailers and made his escape. Everyone knew then he would never be taken alive as his deeds were so bloody and the hanging sentence was over his head. He could expect nothing except to die if he should be captured, and his guns had carried him through so many tight places that if he should be cornered no other thought would even enter his mind except to fight his way out or die trying.

It was he that Pat Garrett intended to get as the leader of the bunch of lawbreakers. So many were the deeds of daring and of cruelty that had been accredited to Billie that everyone figured peace would reign if he were eliminated. Still in some sections he was admired for his bravery and daring exploits and he had the sympathy of the ranchers. These ranchers, of course, were the ones who had not suffered from the rustler raids, and who shielded the Kid for the protection of their herds as much as anything else.

An outlaw never gets so bad but that a girl cannot enter his life and win his affection. Billie, though a hardened criminal, was a flashy knight

of the saddle, and went strong for showy garb of the Mexican caballero type. This gave him an idea that the ladies should all be attracted by him. Being a frequent visitor at the Maxwell ranch, he became deeply in love with a senorita there.

His love was not returned however, and it was through this girl that the U. S. marshall laid his plan to get the outlaw into his meshes. It was next to impossible to locate him out on the range, and harder still, to get in a position to kill or capture him there. Garrett went to the Maxwell ranch and holed up out of sight of all comers so that no word of his presence would be conveyed to the Kid by his friends. After a period of patient waiting he was rewarded by a signal from the girl that the outlaw was in her parlor. Billie had pulled off his boots and made a silent entry into the house.

The marshal and Maxwell were in an adjoining room. Billie heard them talking and asked the girl who they were. She told him that it was only Maxwell and a friend of his. Soon after the girl had let them know by a pre-arranged signal who her visitor was, Maxwell got up from his chair and left the house. He purposely made quite a bit of noise as he was leaving to make the Kid believe he was the visitor and was quitting the place. The girl then told the outlaw that Maxwell's friend had left. Billie, thinking it was Maxwell who had remained in the room, started in to talk to him.

As he came through the door Pat Garrett had him covered. Just as soon as the Kid discovered

the marshall he went for his guns. But Garrett had only to pull the trigger and the most dangerous outlaw and desperado ever on the Western Texas and New Mexico ranges was no more. He fell to the floor dead as the man of the law had done a good job.

"Billie the Kid" had gone the route of so many criminals. He had fallen for a woman and given the officers the clew that led to his destruction. The marshal asked the government for troops to aid in running down the rest of the bunch and when the U. S. soldiers interfered the outlaws were without a leader. Both Perison and the dreaded Kid had been killed. The remaining rustlers left that part of the country and the Chisum-Outlaw war was over for that year, but not for all time.

### IKE FRIDGE SHOT BY INDIANS

After the trouble with "Billie the Kid," and the trouble with Perison and the other rustlers was all over, we started with a bunch of extra saddle horses to Texas to get the last of the cattle that Col. Chisum had bought from Coggins a year or two before. When we got to Rock Creek, twelve miles west of where San Angelo now stands, we camped for the night.

Just in the middle of a peaceful "cow camp" evening—the moon about two hours high, four men on guard around the saddle remuda, two sitting by the fire parching coffee, and the rest of the men lying around on their blankets chatting after a hard day's ride—a more peaceful and quieter picture could not be imagined—as I have said, just in the middle of all the serenity the calm was broken by the dreaded Indian yell.

The cow waddies snapped into action, every man grabbing his gun and seeking what shelter the hastily made camp afforded. The yell of even a small bunch of Indians on a quiet night, leaves the impression that you are attacked by thousands of them and we never did know just how many were on us. Part of them ran our horses off, the others came toward our chuck wagon. During the thick of the fight I was standing by the wagon shooting over it, when a bullet hit the wagon tire. A piece of the leaden bullet split off and hit me in the head. I called to a man nearby: "I'm shot in the head."

He and another puncher or two looked and saw the blood, examined the wound and found the

piece of bullet. They pulled it out. My bunkie, Charlie Nebow, said: "Hell, Ike Fridge, you are not hurt."

We fought them for an hour. They killed one man and wounded two. We never knew how many Indians we killed as they carried them all away with them, but some of us were behind the wagon and others used their stacked saddles for a barricade and our casualties were light compared with that of the redskins, who were in the open and exposed to our well aimed fire.

The four men on horseback who had been holding the horse herd before the Indians took it away from them, rode to Fort Concho that night to get a doctor and a hearse and to secure some teams to pull our wagon to the fort. At daybreak the army ambulance and doctor came, along with a detail of ten soldiers. They took the dead cowboy and one of the wounded ones to the Fort where the wounded man was cared for in the military hospital. I was not hurt badly enough to go to the hospital, and a little patching up by the army surgeon who came out to the camp put me in good shape again. We buried the dead man that day in Fort Concho.

Before we left the battle ground to go to Fort Concho we picked up over two hundred arrows. A number of the Indians had guns that the white man had supplied them with to use against him. It was a bullet from one of them that came so near to bouncing me into the "Happy Hunting Ground," to use the Indian way of describing eternity. The Indian would have been a far less formidable enemy to us in the settlement of these



United States if the love of money had not been so great in the white man. Guns and ammunition were traded for furs or other things the Indians had that could in turn be exchanged for money. The traders in some instances were bound to have known that the guns they were putting into the hands of the red man would later be turned back on them or others of the white race, but greed controlled their actions.

Hence, in addition to the two hundred arrows we found and those that we didn't pick up, many leaden bullets whistled into our camp during the hour that the fight lasted.

Four government mules had been brought out by the soldiers to pull our wagon in and when it reached the government post our boss, Jim McDaniel, bought two yoke of oxen to pull it on to the ranch, a distance of about forty miles. When we got to the ranch Col. Chisum was there. After he was told of the trouble he laughed and said:

"I win a suit of clothes on that."

Chisum had bet Eugene Tague that the Indians would get our horses before we got to the ranch.

The Indians were bad in the country that spring. They had killed many men and stolen a lot of horses. After losing the remuda we started from New Mexico with Chisum taking three men and myself to Austin where he purchased a bunch of horses. When we returned from Austin, Coggin delivered the remainder of the herds the Colonel had bought from him. They were then started on the long trail to Mexico where they



were turned loose with those of the bunches that had preceded them, or at least on the same range. This gave Col. Chisum about all the cattle he could handle conveniently with the pests such as Indians, cattle rustlers and mean Mexicans to contend with, not to mention weather conditions.

It was late in the fall when we arrived at the New Mexico ranch. Of course, before the Coggin cattle could be turned on the range it was necessary to brand them all with the Colonel's brand. While this was being done there was some more gun play. We had a negro in the bunch who was helping brand the cattle. He and one of the white men, Carnahan I believe it was, had had some trouble and during the work of branding, the negro saw a chance to take advantage of the puncher.

The negro said, "I am ready for you now," and made a move to draw his gun. Jim McDaniel heard him and whirled around, drawing and firing his gun as he turned, shooting the black between the eyes before he could kill the cowboy.

We buried the negro by his partner on the bank of the Pecos river. His partner had been killed the previous Christmas day in a fight at the ranch, as detailed in a preceding chapter.

### THE LaPATCHES ON THE WAR PATH

That winter saw a lot of trouble. The La-Patche Indians were particularly bad. We give only one or two incidents that are especially interesting due to the peculiar manner in which the fighting took place.

Goodwin and Walker, two of the Colonel's cowboys, were camped in a kind of dug-out, used for a line camp. It was built in the head of a hollow or draw and covered with poles and dirt. The door was made of box lids and rawhide strings. In that day rawhide strings were used in most instances where we now use wire nails. The chimney was cut in the bank and topped off with large rocks.

The boys reached the dug-out about an hour before sunset and began the preparation of the evening meal. While the men were busy cooking their supper about thirty redskins attacked them. Some ran up on top of the dug-out where they would be safe from bullets from within. Others began shooting in the door. One of the boys closed the door which turned the arrows successfully, and they did not rush the door for fear of being stopped with a white man's bullet.

The red men then resorted to the strategy which is their nature. When Goodwin or Walker would stick a gun out to shoot, the Indians on the roof would drop rocks on their gun barrels and knock them out of their hands or spoil their aim. The savages threw rocks down the chimney until they filled it up. They then began to dig holes in the roof. Goodwin and his partner decided they

would make a break for liberty.

As most of the Indians were on the dug-out the boys opened the door and ran. Walker did not get far until an Indian shot him through the leg. He fell and Goodwin picked him up and put him under a cactus. Goodwin told his comrade that he would go to the ranch and get help. However, he had not gone very far until he heard the Indians yelling and he knew they had found Walker. As soon as Goodwin got to the ranch he got help and went back, but found only Walker's dead body.

One month later in a colorful fight Indians killed Goodwin and his brother.

## WAR RE-OPENS—COL. CHISUM DIES

With the coming of spring the Chisum War opened again. The remnants of the old rustler gang, together with a number of new recruits, drifted back into the territory, and the range again was the scene of fighting between the punchers and the cattle thieves.

Col. Chisum was in poor health, suffering from cancer of the mouth. He was so worried over his physical condition and financial troubles that they took him to Kansas City for treatment and a rest. When they got ready to start with him he called all his men to his bedside and said:

“Jim McDaniel, handle the ranch the best you know how and when I get to Fort Union I will consult the commanding officer and try to stop this war.”

Then he called me over and said:

“Ike Fridge, if I get back alive I will make you my sole heir, for you have made me a faithful man.”

At that time I was only a “straw boss” but had been with the Colonel since I was a fourteen-year-old boy, and my extreme youth and conduct in time of danger had attracted his attention and won his affection. He was never married and having no direct heirs, he planned to leave me what he had.

Though the trip to Kansas City was made with as much care as possible with the crude mode of travel that prevailed then, the intrepid

Colonel failed fast and was very low when the city was reached. He was given the very best medical attention possible, but he soon died.

With the passing of Col. John Chisum the west lost one of its most courageous pioneers and developers. He never permitted fear of the Redskins or cattle rustlers to interfere with his plans for acquiring a new range or extending his herds. He met them on their own terms and the loyal cowpunchers on his ranch were so endeared to him that they never hesitated to make an advance to meet an enemy at his bidding, or for that matter, at the request of the faithful foreman that served him.

His remains were returned to Denton, Texas, and laid to rest near the scene of his first great venture in the cattle game. Not far from his resting place lies the famous "Chisum Trail," that he established, leading to the Kansas markets, and that trail still lives in the memory of every "early-day" cow man who remains in this time of the steel rails, and the fast automobiles which travel over paved highways that in Col. Chisum's life were only cow trails.

Not long after the death of the Colonel his creditors came west and soon tore up the great Chisum ranch. What the creditors left, his two brothers received.

**"LET'S HANG HIM"**

Our cook at the ranch was Beaver Smith, a Yankee negro. When he got drunk he would always shout the praises of Lincoln. Now, of course that kind of talk did not go very well with the boys. The war between the states was fresh in their memory, and they had all been raised by southern parents, some of whom had lost their lives in the conflict of only a few years before.

One day Beaver got drunk and began yelling for Lincoln again. The boys got enough and one said:

"Let's hang him."

These words usually meant action, as there were very few jails and any offense that was considered a crime called for hanging. Someone went for a rope. But since the negro had really committed no crime, I didn't want to see him hanged, so I said:

"Boys, don't hang him, just brand him."

That idea seemed to suit them, so they got a spade hot. This was the last one of three negroes the Colonel had taken to New Mexico, the other two having been killed as already described. As this was the last one, I wished to do the branding. We laid him on his stomach and I put the Chisum brand on his loin, then jingle-bobbed his right ear, as that was the Colonel's mark.



## WE BID GOODBYE TO NEW MEXICO

After the tearing up of the great Chisum ranges and the passing of the power of the Chisum organization, the rustler-controlled Mex government in the Spanish towns around began to make things hot for former Chisum men. Things continued to get warmer and eight of us left one night for Texas. There was no brass band to play at our departure and no farewell turkey dinner in our honor. We just rode, and when daybreak came we were near the border of Texas, and soon were out of the state of New Mexico.

One week later, by traveling light and fast we were making our arrival at the Chisum ranch in Texas. The Chisum brothers had a few cattle left and one of the old bosses by the name of Fitzgerald took us on and started out on a round-up of the scattered herds. The outfit consisted of fifteen men. We started for the San Saba river and gathered quite a bunch of cattle.

One morning Coggin and five other men went down the river to make a drive while the other men came around the other side where we were holding the cattle. The river was south of us and there was a range of hills on the north. Where the hills met the bank of the river, it was impossible to cross either the range or the river.

Some of the boys looked back and saw a cloud of dust. We thought it was cattle raising the dust but Coggin said it was Indians. As they came nearer we saw that sure enough a large number of Indians was advancing upon us. We knew that it was useless to run and that we might

as well prepare to fight.

One man who was riding a fine horse, said: "I will never fight them. I can outrun them." The rest of us got off our horses and were ready to fight, but the fellow that thought he could outrun them headed his horse up the river. The Indians were there by then and fired on us but as soon as they saw the lonely figure running away they knew they had easy prey, so they took after him. They chased him to where the hills and river came together and he was in a natural trap. There he was killed.

We rode four miles to a ranger camp to notify them, as there were too many redskins for us to handle. We joined forces with the rangers and tried to overtake the Indians, but failed.

The body of the man that was killed was found and carried back to the ranger camp where it was buried. The next day we went on another round. A long hollow or draw that drained into the San Saba river was selected as the starting point for one drive. The boss left a negro and me to keep the herd moving down the draw, while the rest of the men were scattered on either side, throwing what strays they picked up in to us in the draw. At the mouth of the draw was a big flat where we intended to throw all the bunch of cattle together.

The mesquite trees were very thick and in driving down the draw I thought I saw some horses' legs through the trees. Upon closer investigation I made out that they were in reality horses. When we came to a little opening in the

brush we saw that the horses were being ridden by Indians.

The negro said: "Let's turn back."

I told him that the Indians hadn't seen us yet and there was no use turning.

"Maybe we can fool along behind them and they will go on down to where the main bunch of men are."

They finally saw us, however, and then went to running. An Indian will fight if he knows he has the advantage, but in this case they couldn't tell, for the thickness of the brush, how many men were after them. When the negro and I saw they were on the run, we just dropped in behind them and went to shooting and giving the old-time cowboy yell, which, when given by cowboys on the war path is almost as vicious-sounding as the Indian yell. We killed one horse but the rider jumped on another mount and stayed up with his gang.

The boys at the main holding place heard the shooting and came up the hollow toward us. They ran into the Indians and killed one. We all got together and chased the red men about two miles, but couldn't catch them.

It was late in the fall when the rounding up was completed and we went back to our ranch. There wasn't much work to be done until next spring and the Indians didn't raid us that winter, so we had a few months of quiet ranch life.

In the spring of 1873 things changed. A few people began to move in. A man by the name of Bill Williams lived near Brownwood. He had

a wife and four children, a six-months-old infant, a girl of six, a boy of eight, the eldest being a boy about twelve.

Williams built a log house but as he had no lumber, he didn't put up any doors. One morning he and the oldest boy had gone to the post oaks to cut timber to build a cowpen. While they were away from the house, Indians came.

The signs showed that the woman put up a desperate fight but she was killed and scalped. The baby was thrown into the fire and they took the other two children and left. Williams heard the shooting and hurried home, only to find his home wrecked. His wife was killed, his baby burned to a crisp and two of his children missing.

He sent his son to the little settlement of Brownwood to report what had happened. The citizens followed the Indians, crowding them so, that they found the boy with his hands tied behind his back and his body in the forks of a tree. Th chase led on to Red river but the Indians were never sighted.

Williams buried his wife and baby together. He left the twelve-year-old son at Brownwood and joined the Texas Rangers, vowing he would get an Indian for every hair in his wife's head. He made one of the best rangers on the frontier and did kill a lot of Indians. I was in company with him later and found him to be a likeable fellow, but he sure did hate redskins.

**THE BUFFALO SLAUGHTER IS ON**

By the middle of the summer great changes had come about. Tenderfoots began to pop up in a hurry and buffalo hunters came thick and fast. The great mass of buffalo began to be slaughtered. The white carcasses were thick all over the prairie. One good buffalo hunter could kill sixty in one stand. If a buffalo leader was killed, the rest of the herd would circle around him and it was an easy matter to kill many of them. The hunters would pile the buffalo hides in their camps and then late in the fall each outfit would have five or six wagons with six yoke of steers to the wagon. They would haul them to Fort Griffin or other freighting points. Most of the hides, together with the tallow, that was hauled to Fort Griffin, was sold to Conrad and Ruth.

The hunters had much trouble with the Indians but they fought them and stayed in after the Buffalo.

Howard Peak, writing for a Texas newspaper in 1926 has this to say in regard to the buffalo situation of the time referred to here:

"Other than Weatherford, Stephenville, Comanche, Brownwood, Coleman, Eastland, Palo Pinto and Jacksboro—the latter was just across the creek from Fort Richardson—there were no towns west of Fort Worth, when the first train arrived 50 years ago.

"Forts Concho, across the Concho river from San Angelo, Camp Colorado, Fort McKavitt, Fort



Griffin and Fort Richardson, were active military posts, engaged in maintaining peace on the outposts of the frontier. Abilene was not on the map, nor was Cisco. Buffalo Gap, some 15 miles to the southwest of Abilene, had sprung up as a cattle trading point, but as far west as El Paso, and to the uttermost confines of the Panhandle, with the exception of Tascosa, there was nothing but rolling prairie which was thick with buffalo and antelope. Owing to the fact that the buffalo possessed such a valuable hide, they became commercialized and were slaughtered indiscriminately.

Thousands of hunters flocked to the West and engaged in the hunt for this valuable animal. His doom was sealed. The United States government closed its eyes to the ruthless slaughter, and permitted untold thousands of this life sustaining beast to be killed for the paltry sum of \$1 for each hide delivered to covetous dealers who, in turn, shipped them to Eastern markets with great gain.

The writer has seen in one day, in Fort Griffin, more than 5,000 buffalo hides stacked in bales ready for shipment. He has also seen in the yards of Morehead & Co., located at the foot of Houston street, Fort Worth, thousands of buffalo hides bound for the Eastern market. It is a crying shame that a country like this should have been so short sighted as to permit the near extinction of this grand and meat-giving animal. Today, only a few thousand buffalo are now in existence, and they are scattered from Col. Chas. Goodnight's ranch in Palo Duro Canyon, near

Amarillo, to the confines of Western Canada.

"While the meat of the buffalo was savory and sustaining, the hide was the most valuable part of the animal. Unless one has seen these beautiful robes, and slept in the open, and enjoyed their protecting warmth when a cold norther was bearing down on him, he cannot appreciate their benefits. The writer has been in the camps of the Tonkawa Indians, near old Fort Griffin and watched the squaws as they tanned, rubbed, dressed and painted these hides, rendering them into soft and furry robes that would grace the homes of a prince.

"The finest of these coverings, measuring from 6 by 8 to 8 by 10 feet, as soft as buckskin, and stenciled on the fleshy side with depictions of Indian scenes and done by tribal artists, often sold for from \$6 to \$10 and, were it possible to get them today, would bring easily \$100.

But, like so many of the treasures of the early Westerners, the buffalo and buffalo robes have passed to the realms of the unknown and are now but a fading tradition."

### WITH THE TEXAS RANGERS

In the early spring of 1874 the Indians made a big raid. I was with the Texas Rangers at the time. The raiders stole about four hundred horses. They cleaned the whole country and killed several men.

The cowmen and rangers got together fifty strong and went after them. We cooked bread and got some dried beef and tied it on to our saddles and followed the redskins. On the second day out, as the Captain and I were riding in front, we saw a creek ahead with heavy elm and hackberry on the north side and with a little row of hills to the south. The Captain stopped the men and instructed them to wait there while he and I went to the top of a hill to see what we could find. When we got to the hill, we got off our horses and crept to the top. There we sighted a plenty of redskins. Cautiously peering over the crest of the hill we saw them in a valley of approximately four hundred acres.

Their horses were herded by two boys we took to be Indians. The others were under the trees enjoying the shade while their squaws were cooking meat the hunters had killed. The captain and I went back to our men and told them where the savages were. He detailed two other men to go with me to run the Indians' horses off as they charged the savage camp. We did as we were told and as we started the horses, a boy came riding toward me. I thought the best shot would win and fired at him but missed.

He throwed his bow and arrows down and

ran to me. When he got closer to me he said, "Me no Indian. We run the horses over the hill and round them up." I found the boy to be white and that he could speak some English. The Captain had told me to join in the fight as soon as the horses were started, so after a few words with the boy I left him with the other two men and headed in the direction of the firing.

By the sound of the shooting I could tell the main fighting was drifting up the creek. I spurred my horse into a gallop up the hill and ran upon fifteen Indian warriors. They opened fire on me and of course I had to run. I turned and went to where some of our men were. By that time the Indians were badly scattered. I rode over three dead ones before I got to the white men.

A cowman and the Ranger Captain were down off their horses fighting with a bunch of Indians that were hemmed in a bend of the creek. The captain told me to get off my horse and fall in. I did this just in time to save his life. An Indian was less than twenty feet from him. The Captain got a shell hung in his gun and was trying to get it out. The savage was shooting at him and I said:

"Cap, look out or he will kill you."

The Captain said, "He can't hit me."

Just as the Indian raised his gun to shoot again, I shot him under the arm. He fell over on his head.

We killed eight of the enemy and wounded

quite a lot. The band scattered all over the country and it was impossible to trail them for another battle until after they came together again. Three of our men were slightly wounded. We went back to our horses. A Mexican we had with us had scalped the dead Indians.

The Mexican could use the Indian lingo and we had him along as an interpreter. When we got back to my prisoner the Mexican talked in the Indian tongue with the boy for sometime. The boy said his people were killed by redskins and he thought they had lived at Lampasas.

When we returned to our camp a couple of days later the cowmen came and got their horses that we had recovered from the raiders.

We found out later from the boy that he had been with the Indians ten years. He said that he had a sister that was captured when he was and that she was a prisoner of the Kiowa Indians. The chief of that tribe was called Rain-in-the-Face. This boy stayed with the rangers for quite awhile. He thought his name was Helms. He gave the paint pony he was riding when he was rescued, to me as a token of appreciation. The boy followed me everywhere I went and when I was on guard duty he was with me. About a month later the Captain started with the boy to Austin. When they got ready to leave he hugged my neck and cried.

The Governor found out all he could from the lad about his sister and with the help of an officer and friends of the Helms family, made up one thousand dollars to give Rain-in-the-Face



for the delivery of the girl on the south side of Red river. It was all arranged through an Indian trader and the girl and her brother were sent to their grand parents in Tennessee.

Three months later I quit the Rangers and went back to the cow ranch.



## UP THE TRAIL

While punching cattle I went up the trail to McAllister in the Indian Territory, with Fitzgerald, an old trail driver. We carried a large herd and took about all the knocks that were coming to a trail driver.

In those days the cowboys had no bedding. Our bed was our saddle blanket. The saddle was our pillow. We would stand guard all night around the herd of cattle with it raining and lightening. The lightning would play over the long horns of the steers as if they were lightning rods.

Fitzgerald sold his cattle and we came back to the Texas ranch late in the fall.



**MrKINZIE SLAYS INDIANS**

There were only two more big Indian raids. On one raid about two thousand warriors and squaws moved on the south side of Red River. They killed lots of buffalo hunters and citizens. Fourteen buffalo hunters fought a lot of the savages for two days and nights. In fact they fought them until all the hunters were killed except one. He made his escape and came back to Fort Concho and notified General McKinzie.

The General picked two companies of men out of his post and hit the trail. With McKinzie as leader the white men overtook the red men at Palodura Canyon. When the Indians were located McKinzie talked to his men and told them to kill everything that moved as "knits made lice."

The attack was made about daybreak. Everything in the camp that could set alone began to shoot but that did not bluff McKinzey. The slaughter was terrific and even the hardened Indian hater, McKinzie, was moved. He then changed his orders and told his men to capture all they could. They killed, captured and wounded nine hundred of the savages and took fourteen head of horses. All the worthless Indian ponies were killed by the soldiers to keep the Indians that escaped from catching them later and attacking the white folks. Then he gave orders to his men to go back over the battlefield and put out of their suffering all of the wounded who could not walk.

He took the squaws to Fort Concho. Later on they were taken to Austin and traded back to the Indians for whites that had been captured by

them. The government moved McKinzie as the officials were afraid he would kill all the Indians. but he had put the fear into their hearts so that no more big raids were made.



**FORT GRIFFIN A TOWN OF KILLERS**

By that time the buffalo had begun to get scarce. In the spring of 1875 the Buffalo hunters had to quit as there was not enough of the noble animals left on the plains to pay the expenses of the slayers.

The tenderfeet began to pour into the country and take charge of it. In the fall of 1875 I went to Fort Griffin and stayed there that winter as an inspector. My duties were to watch the slaughter pens for stock that might have been rustled from my employers. A number of cowmen went in together on my salary to have me look after their interests there. The government had two hundred Tonkawa Indians at the post that they were feeding and it required quite a lot of beef for them and the soldiers that were maintained there.

The government bought beeves from anyone who had good stock and it was a temptation to the rustlers to slip in a few head of stolen beeves when possible. I had some lively times that winter. Fort Griffin was a wild town. Shooting scrapes were common and lots of men were killed there. To die with one's boots on was nothing uncommon, and a killing was soon forgotten for the reason that a more recent one held the public attention.

The soldiers at the Fort were, for the most part, negroes and the cowboys, rangers and buffalo hunters did not like them. There were a number of bad fights between them and the fights



seemed to encourage lawlessness.

Since I had always been on the range and on the go, this way of remaining in one place got old to me, so I went to South Texas in the spring of 1876. After gathering quite a herd of cattle we came back as far as Shackleford county, but two years later we came further north in search of better range and started a ranch on the Big Wichita River. This was a rolling mesquite country and the mesquite grass made fine pasture for range-bred cattle.

### A COWBOY FIGHT

Starting from the little Wichita river in 1879 with an outfit consisting of only four men we took a nice bunch of choice steers to Gainesville, Texas. The Indian trouble was all over and the range was so peaceful that no thought of trouble entered our minds, so after we had sold the steers at Gainesville, and delivered them to a ranch at Whitesboro, the three cowboys with me went on to Fort Worth for a sort of jubilee and general celebration characteristic of one of their type, enjoyed by those who have been long in the open spaces.

That left me to return alone with the extra horses. Naturally, looking for company, I met a man that was coming west and we fell in together. His name sounded funny to me, McAimey it was, but it wasn't considered just the proper thing to question people too much. He told me of his adventures in the western country and talked of the many fights he had seen and taken part in. I knew better than to believe them, but being lonesome and needing help with the horses, too, I fell for his line, hook, sinker and all. I thought he was the very idea, but to my sorrow it was not long before I learned different.

Just at the close of the second day's riding we got to Cambridge, just east of Henrietta. There we went into the little saloon to get a drink of their whiskey. Four men that had been in the saloon long enough to be feeling kind of proud of themselves began to pick at us. They teased us considerably and called us "Sap Oak

Cowpunchers." We didn't say anything. Just drank our little swig and went on about a half-mile and camped for what we thought would be the night. As we were making camp my new partner said:

"I was just fixing to call those fellows' hand when you left the saloon."

I told him we didn't want to have any trouble. About that time the four men passed us and yelled at us some, and went on to Henrietta. We were so close to town that we decided we would go on to Henrietta and have a cafe meal. After putting the horses in the wagon yard for the night we headed to the restaurant and on the way we saw these same four men going down the street talking to each other. As we passed we spoke to them and they returned our greetings with "Hello, tenderfeet." We still remained silent. After we had finished eating we went down into the main part of town and entered the big false fronted dance hall. I knew the man who ran the hall and I saw a woman that was formerly at Fort Griffin. She knew me at Fort Griffin as "Fant Hill Jack."

This fellow Gibbins, the proprietor of the hall, said, "You boys come on and take a drink."

The girl walked up between me and my partner and said to me: "Jack, we have taken several drinks together." About that time these four men that had decided to torment us walked into the dance hall. My partner whispered to me: "If they say anything I will call their hand."

One of them walked up to us and put his

hand on the girl's shoulder and asked her if she knew who she was talking to. She replied that she did. "He is my friend." As she said that, he took her by the hand and jerked her away from us. He had a quirt in his hand and hit her with it. That was more than I could stand to see and I knew he meant it as an insult to me. I walked up to him and slapped him in the mouth. He changed ends with the quirt and hit me over the head with the loaded end. The blow knocked me down over the stove.

Now was the time for my gallant partner to show his metal. I figured on him helping to keep the others back while I mixed it with this big fellow with the loaded quirt. But right there that partner's nerve wilted like a morning glory in the hot sunshine. Running into the big cowpuncher, I grabbed him in the collar and was mixing it with him when one of his pals rushed into the melee. I backed toward a corner of the room to keep my back protected, and looked for the brave partner, but he was not to be seen. He had vamoosed.

The two fellows kept crowding me and I jerked my gun. The first one backed off but the other one came forward. I hit him over the head with the gun, and looked just in time to see the other one going after his gun. I learned that his name was Giles Flippen. When I saw Flippen drawing his gun I knew trouble was going to start. I began to shoot at him and the third shot struck him. He fell and I started to shoot again,

but the fellow that ran the dance hall yelled:

"You have killed him. Don't shoot any more."

As the smoke cleared I discovered that the room was empty with the exception of the wounded man, the bartender and me.

I went to the wagon yard where our horses were and caught one and got on him bare-back, then rode up to the livery stable where my saddle horse was. I thought that I might be able to get my horse and saddle, but I saw five men guarding the stable. Going back to my camp I decided to try again at daybreak. The next morning when I got to the stable, a boy was the only person in sight. I told him I wanted my horse and he told me to saddle him, then he went out the front door. Just as I got the saddle and blanket on my horse, four men came in the door and started toward me.

I asked them what they wanted and one fellow said they wanted me. I then asked the spokesman if he was an officer and he said he was the deputy sheriff, so I told him that if he would send the other men out I would give up to him but not to the whole bunch. As soon as the others left I handed him my gun. He took me by the cafe for my breakfast and I asked him how the fellow was that had been shot. He said that the man wasn't hurt much but that I should have killed him. We then went on to the jail where my former partner was safely locked up and after I got in I told him that he had proved himself to be a fine fellow. He was so ashamed



that he didn't say much.

They kept me in jail nineteen days and the fellow I had shot proved to be my friend. The grand jury went to his bed to see him in an effort to get a bill against me for assault and attempt to murder, but he told them:

"No, they should have killed the four of us."

I was tried for assault and battery and paid a fine, then got my horses and outfit together and went on to the ranch.

### CATTLE DRIFT OFF THE RANGE

In the winter of 1879—a cold wet winter—the cattle drifted south from the Red river and Wichita river ranges and we tried to hold them as near the range as possible. The cowmen got together and put the south line of the range on the Clear Fork of the Brazos river, but cattle drifted there and cleaned up the forage of the range until we decided to turn them loose.

Then in the spring of 1880 the cowmen had a meeting. We decided to go to the Colorado river, as that was considered about as far south as the cattle had drifted during the winter. There we were to commence the work of gathering and returning the herds to their home ranges. The twenty-fifth of March we made the start south and three hundred cowboys with ten chuck wagons all got together on Pecan Bayou in Brown county, just north of the Colorado river. There we fixed to work back to the ranch, and each outfit was given its territory to drag for strays. The people in that country said it looked like war times as we all assembled in that county.

As we went down my cow wagon and outfit stopped for the night about two miles south of Cisco, which was just a tent town then. The Texas and Pacific railroad was being built and a town was springing up. There were two wooden buildings and they were saloons.

The boys wanted to go back to town that night, so we all went. The people there saw some real cowboys. The boys began to drink liquor and get noisy. Cisco had a city marshall. He

came into the saloon where there was a bunch of the boys and said:

"You boys will have to be more quiet."

Dick McDuff asked: "Well, who are you?"

"I am the marshall of this town," the man replied.

Dick then asked him to take a drink, but he refused. Another boy told the bartender to give him a bottle, then he said to the marshall:

"Now, you drink or we will pour it down you."

Some of the cowboys were yelling, "Pour it down him," and the officer took a drink of the whiskey. Then another puncher said:

"This —— saloon man needs air."

They began to shoot through the roof and the saloon man left the house.

I said, "Boys, we had better go or we will all get into trouble."

We went and got our horses, roped some tents and dragged them into the postoaks, then went down by a little hut they used for a jail. The house was about ten feet square and one of the boys remarked: "Let's turn it over."

When we tied on to it, a man on the inside yelled:

Don't, you will kill me."

But, nevertheless, we turned it upside down and left the prisoner hollering.

When fixing to leave camp next morning we saw a bunch of men coming and as they rode up to camp we saw they were officers and were headed by the sheriff. He called for the boss man and I rode out to where he was. He said that he would have to take the boys back.

I asked: "What is the trouble?"

"Well, it is the way the boys acted last night."

"No one killed?"

"No."

"You won't take us back then, and if you start to, you will have trouble. The saloon man sold that whiskey to these boys and they just drank too much. We paid him for all we got and these boys won't ever stand to go back without serious trouble.

Then he said: "All right, we don't want to have any trouble."

I replied: "If you want to start anything there will be over three hundred of us to work coming back."

Rather than incur the ill feeling of the cowboys and cause a young war they went on back to town and we proceeded on our journey to the general camp.

**A BEAR IS ROPED—A WOMAN IS WED**

During the work of gathering the cattle for the drive north to the home range, Dick McDuff, Bob McKinney and I were driving a herd of cattle through the timber near a cornfield when we saw a big black bear run into the corn patch out of the postoaks. We took down our ropes and Dick roped the bear by the head while I caught him with my rope by the hind legs. Bob went down to a log house nearby and asked the lady for an axe. They were old-fashioned frontier people and the woman simply said:

“The axe is at the woodpile.”

The girl, however, figured we had treed something and asked Bob what we had. He told her that we had found a bear and added:

“If you like bear meat, we will give him to you.”

We killed and dressed him and hung the meat in a post oak tree in the yard and threw the skin over the rail fence. McKinney told the girl that the skin would make her a nice rug and she said she would dress it. They thanked us and we rode off.

Awhile later I went into a store in a little town in that section and met the girl again. She looked me over and asked me if I was not one of the boys that had killed and given them the bear. When I admitted that I was, she told me that she and her mother had lots of fun out of her father by telling him they had killed the bear. We bade



each other goodbye and I never saw her again.

We got back to the ranch on July 15th, and as the country was filling up with different kinds of people the real cowboys began drifting out and going to the western and northern territory.

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That winter we went into our home camps and one day a cowboy from a nearby ranch came over and told me that there was going to be a big dance that night and asked me to go with him. I got my glad rags on and went and had a jolly good time.

While there I met a young lady that attracted me very much and she didn't seem to have much trouble looking at me, so we spent the evening getting acquainted. I went back to the camp with my head filled with other thoughts than working on the range in all kinds of weather and eating cow camp grub.

Other meetings occurred and I made up my mind that if I could get her to be my wife I would quit the roaming life and settle down. Once a cowboy makes a decision, action is what he craves, and she soon became Mrs. Ike Fridge.







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FRIDGE, IKE  
HISTORY OF THE CHISUM WAR:  
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